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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 TEL AVIV 002236

SIPDIS

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NEA/SA/EX FOR RICHIE; DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA; DEPT FOR
DS/IP/NEA;
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DANIN; USAID FOR DCHA, DCHA/FPP, PRM FOR
DEWEY/GREENE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KWBG PHUM PREL PTER ASEC CASC GZ IS](#)

SUBJECT: WB/G SITREP: IDF KILLS THREE PALESTINIANS IN GAZA,
MILITANTS LAUNCH TWO-DAY MORTAR BARRAGE IN RESPONSE --
APRIL 11, 2005 (1200 HOURS LOCAL)

This is a joint ConGen Jerusalem/Embassy Tel Aviv cable.

1. (SBU) Summary: Israeli police on April 10 arrested 31 Israeli right-wing protesters during a demonstration in the Old City of Jerusalem. Israeli police also arrested eight Palestinians during clashes in the vicinity of the Lion's Gate entrance to the Old City the same day. Israeli police on April 10 arrested West Bank Hamas leader Hassan Yusif, as well as his son and one aide, after Yusif entered Jerusalem without Israeli authorization. The police released all three the same evening. In Gaza, IDF soldiers shot and killed three Palestinian youths April 9 on the western edge of the Rafah refugee camp. According to the IDF, the youths, aged 14-17, were involved in smuggling and did not respond to warning shots the soldiers fired. Palestinians claim the three were among a group of five youths playing soccer in the cleared area near the fence. The other two youths were arrested. In retaliation for the youths' deaths, Palestinian militants fired more than 75 mortar shells and homemade rockets at IDF and Israeli settler targets April 9-11. No injuries were reported from these mortar and rocket attacks, although one house in Neve Dekalim was damaged. End Summary.

West Bank

2. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Clashes/Injuries: Palestinians in the village of Deir Ballut on April 8 clashed with Israeli security forces to protest the construction of the separation barrier, and 16 Palestinians sustained light injuries.

-- Clashes/Injuries: Israeli police on April 10 clashed with Palestinians at the Lion's Gate entrance to the Old City of Jerusalem. Three Israeli policemen and 13 Palestinians sustained injuries, none life-threatening (See &Old City Demonstrations/Arrests8).

-- Clashes/Injuries: Palestinians on April 10 clashed with the IDF near Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, resulting in two Palestinian injuries from rubber bullets. Palestinians also threw an explosive device at an IDF position located near the Tomb. There were no reported injuries from this incident.

3. (SBU) ARRESTS/SECURITY:

-- Arrests: Israeli security forces on April 9 arrested two Palestinian teenagers at the Huwara checkpoint, south of Nablus, after the IDF discovered the teenagers carrying a bag containing materials used to make firebombs.

-- Incursions/Arrests: The IDF on April 9 entered Illar village, northeast of Tulkarm, and Beita village, south of Nablus, and arrested a total of five Palestinians.

-- Settler Incidents: Israeli settlers on April 9 blocked a West Bank road connecting Nablus and Ramallah. Elsewhere, Israeli settlers threw stones at a Palestinian home in Deir Sharaf village, northwest of Nablus. There were no injuries reported from this incident.

-- Shooting: Palestinians on April 9 fired gunshots at an Israeli vehicle traveling near Tel village, south of Nablus. There were no reported injuries from this incident. The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed responsibility for the shooting.

-- Security: Palestinians on April 9 threw explosive devices at IDF soldiers operating near Bethlehem. There were no reported injuries from this incident.

-- Old City Demonstrations/Arrests: According to press reports, Israeli police on April 10 arrested 31 Israeli right-wing protesters during a demonstration in the Old City of Jerusalem. Most of those detained were subsequently released from custody. In addition, Israeli police arrested eight Palestinians during clashes in the vicinity of the Lion's Gate entrance to the Old City.

-- Arrests: Israeli police on April 10 arrested West Bank Hamas leader Hassan Yusif, as well as his son and one aide, after Yusif entered Jerusalem without Israeli authorization. The police made the actual arrests after all three left the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound, and released them from custody the same evening.

-- Arrests: Israeli security forces arrested two Palestinians militants April 10, one in Idhna village, west of Hebron, and the other in Kafr Ni'ma, west of Ramallah.

-- Arrests: The IDF on April 10 arrested three Palestinians in possession of firebombs near Jamma, in village, south of Nablus.

-- Incursion/Arrests: The IDF on April 10 entered Silwad village, north of Ramallah, and arrested 10 Palestinians.

-- Incursion/Arrest: The IDF on April 10 entered al-Yamun village, northwest of Jenin, and arrested one PIJ activist.

-- Incursion/Arrest: The IDF on April 11 entered Nablus and arrested a local Fatah activist with reported ties to Hizballah. In addition to the Fatah activist, the IDF took 20 Palestinians into custody for questioning before withdrawing from the city.

-- Security: Palestinians on April 10 threw five firebombs at an Israeli vehicle traveling near Atara village, north of Ramallah, damaging the vehicle. There were no injuries reported from this incident.

14. (SBU) DEMOLITIONS/CONFISCATIONS:

-- Confiscation orders: According to Palestinian media, Israeli military authorities on April 9 issued land confiscation orders for 700 dunams in Deir Ibzi, village, west of Ramallah. Media also reported that Israeli authorities ordered the confiscation of 50 dunams of Palestinian land in Halhul and Bayt Ummar villages, north of Hebron.

15. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmud Abbas condemned the April 9 shooting of three Palestinians by the IDF near the Gaza-Egyptian border, calling the incident a violation of the agreements reached between the Israeli Government and the PA at the Sharm al-Shaykh summit in February.

-- Israeli security services on April 10 detained for several hours Abbas Zaki, a senior Fatah official and Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) representative from Hebron, after Zaki entered into the West Bank from Jordan at the Allenby Bridge crossing.

Gaza

16. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Death: UNRWA reported that a PIJ militant, shot and injured by IDF soldiers in January as he was attempting to fire a mortar at Netzarim settlement, died of his wounds April 10.

-- Deaths: UNRWA and media reported that IDF soldiers shot and killed three Palestinian youths April 9 on the western edge of the Rafah refugee camp. According to the IDF, the three youths, aged 14-17, were involved in smuggling and did not respond to warning shots the soldiers fired. Palestinians claim the three were among a group of five youths who were playing soccer in the cleared area near the fence. The other two youths were arrested, according to Israeli media reports (see "Arrests").

-- Death: UNRWA reported that a Palestinian man was found fatally shot in Gaza City April 8 in what appears to have been an internal Palestinian dispute. His family closed off the main streets in the city and burned tires until PA security forces dispersed the crowd of relatives later the same evening.

-- Death/Injury: UNRWA reported that a Palestinian woman was shot and killed and her sister severely beaten by a group of masked, armed Palestinians the evening of April 8 in Bayt

Lahiyah. The reasons for the attack are unknown; PA police are investigating.

-- Injuries: UNRWA reported that shrapnel injured at least seven Palestinians April 9 when rockets and mortars fired by militant groups at Israel settler targets in the Gaza Strip fell short and landed in Palestinian areas.

-- Injuries: UNRWA reported that shrapnel injured two militants the April 8 when the rocket they were attempting to fire at Neve Dekalim exploded prematurely.

-- Catch-up item: Injury: UNRWA reported that IDF gunfire injured one Palestinian April 7 in Rafah.

-- Mortars/Rockets: UNRWA reported that Palestinian militants fired more than 75 mortar shells and homemade rockets at IDF and Israeli settler targets April 9-11. The rockets were reportedly fired in revenge for the killing of three Palestinian youths aged 14-17 in Rafah April 9 see "Deaths A variety of terrorist organizations, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades claimed responsibility for the attacks. One building in Neve Dekalim was reportedly damaged but no Israeli injuries were reported.

-- Mortars/Rockets: UNRWA reported that three Qassam rockets were fired into Israel April 9-11, two towards Sderot and one towards Kibbutz Nahal Oz. The IDF reported only a single Qassam in the same period, fired at Nativ Ha'asara village in the Negev.

-- Shootings: The IDF reported that Palestinian militants launched a total of six shooting attacks at IDF and Israeli settler targets in the Gaza Strip April 9-12.

-- Explosions: The IDF reported that IDF soldiers found and deactivated two explosive devices April 9, one near Neve Dekalim and the other north of Karni Crossing.

17. (SBU) ARRESTS:

-- UNRWA reported that IDF soldiers arrested three unarmed Palestinians April 9, as the three were attempting to sneak into Israel south of the Sufa Crossing.

-- Israeli media reported that PA security forces arrested two Palestinians in Rafah April 9, after IDF soldiers opened fire on a group of five Palestinian youths, engaged in what the IDF claims were smuggling activities. The other three youths were killed (see "Deaths").

18. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS:

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open April 9-11, with a major detour at Netzarim Junction. Only public transportation is allowed to cross Abu Khouli checkpoint.

-- Erez Crossing was open for internationals and for a limited number of Palestinians April 8-10, and 2,471 laborers and 202 merchants crossed into Israel April 8. On April 9, 193 laborers and 63 merchants entered Israel, and on April 10 4,129 laborers and 202 merchants entered.

-- The Erez Industrial Zone was closed for the weekend April 8-9. On April 10, 657 laborers entered.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed April 9. Sufa was open for the import of aggregates used in construction April 10-11.

-- Karni Terminal was open April 9-11.

-- Rafah Terminal was open for arrivals and departures April 9-11.

-- Tel al-Sultan checkpoint was closed April 9-11. Toufah checkpoint was open for residents of al-Mowassi.

19. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- UNRWA and Israeli and Palestinian media reported on extensive demonstrations throughout the Gaza Strip April 9-11. According to these reports, some 3,000 demonstrators turned out April 9 in Khan Yunis in protest over the deaths of three Palestinian youths earlier that day in Rafah (see "Deaths"). In Rafah April 10, some 10,000 Palestinians participated in the youths funeral procession. Other demonstrations took place throughout Gaza in support of the defense of the al-Aqsa mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem, with some 5,000 demonstrating in Gaza City April 10 and smaller demonstrations elsewhere. UNRWA estimated 50,000-70,000 demonstrated in Gaza City April 8 to support defense of the mosque.

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